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ABSTRACT

This monograph is designed to serve as a vision for guiding the future of vocational education at the middle level. Chapter 1, "Understanding Early Adolescents" (Frances Smith), provides an overview of early adolescent development as a basis for developing middle-level vocational education programs. Chapter 2, "Essential Elements of Middle-Level Education" (John Lounsbury), discusses 10 characteristics of a high quality middle school and the special role of vocational education. Chapter 3, "Exploring Life's Work: A New Role for Vocational Education" (Jerelyn Schultz), identifies basic beliefs that reflect fundamental convictions about vocational education at the middle school level. A proposed statement of the philosophy of vocational education at the middle level identifies what is most important for vocational education to be doing and forms a basis for future planning efforts. It then describes core concepts that should be integrated into the middle school curriculum to assist early adolescents in exploring life's work. Chapter 4, "Exploring Life's Work: Model Programs" (Mary Schumway), showcases middle-level vocational education curricula or models in three states: New York, Utah, and Wisconsin. Chapter 5, "Setting an Agenda for the Future: Challenges for Vocational Education" (N. L. McCaslin et al.), presents suggestions organized by national, state, and local actions. Belief statements, agendas, and other materials related to the education of young adolescents. (YLB)

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Middle-Level Education:

Implications for Vocational Education

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A Position Paper from the Ad Hoc Middle School Task Force

American Vocational Association

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Implications for Vocational Education

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Introduction

Education at the middle-school level represents a unique opportunity for vocational education and for the American Vocational Association. The AVA Board of Directors recognized the importance of middle-level vocational education when it established the Ad Hoc Middle School Task Force in 1989. In addition, the Board incorporated middle school initiatives into its 1990, 1991 and 1992 programs of work. Sessions have been held at AVA annual conventions dealing with middle schools, and middle school was the theme of a 1991 issue of the *Vocational Education Journal.*

The Ad Hoc Middle School Task Force concluded that the association needed to develop a clear and complete statement regarding the role of vocational education at the middle level. This statement would include essential beliefs that would guide middle-level curriculum, teaching and teacher preparation and in-service as well as recommend core concepts for middle-level vocational-technical education programs.

During spring 1992 the Ad Hoc Middle School Task Force met in Columbus, Ohio, and actively involved middle school experts in the identification of beliefs and core concepts and in the development of a philosophical statement. This monograph is the result of collaborative efforts between the task force representing the American Vocational Association and middle school experts representing the National Middle School Association. It is hoped that this document will serve as a vision for guiding the future of vocational education at the middle level.

Members of the Ad Hoc Middle School Task Force are: Harry Drier, Charles Johnson, N. L. McCaslin, Mary Monroe Schumway, Rosemarie Rossetti, Jerelyn B. Schultz, Preston Smeltzer, Frances M. Smith, Donald Zahn and Ruth E. Dohner. Middle school experts who contributed their

(continued on next page)

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Chapter 1

Understanding Early Adolescents

by Frances M. Smith

If they are to design programs to meet early adolescents' needs, vocational educators need to remember what it felt like to be an early adolescent and they need to better understand early adolescent development. This chapter will provide an overview of early adolescent development as a basis for developing middle-level vocational education programs.

Intellectual Development

Imagine that you are an early adolescent. You have just completed a childhood in which you have been allowed to explore the world within fairly safe limits. In general, you feel good about yourself and the world around you.

School takes up a significant part of an early adolescent's day. The school setting has changed dramatically for most of them. Instead of spending the day in a self-contained classroom, most of them will move to a different classroom for each subject with all kinds of variations in between. If they are lucky, the schools and the teachers they come in contact with will value them as individuals and will be interested in their individual growth and development.

Traditionally, schools have concentrated on intellectual development, but development of the whole person is also particularly important. Teachers who know about physical and socio-emotional development, as well as intellectual growth, are valuable to early adolescents.

Intellectually, adolescents are beginning to be able to manipulate ideas as well as concrete objects. They use experiences they have had to imagine experiences that they have not yet had. They can begin to conceptualize things they have never touched, seen, smelled, heard or tasted. However, they need help in moving from concrete thinking to abstract reasoning, thus practice in problem solving becomes essential. Now abstract words become a greater part of their vocabulary.

Early adolescents often set a standard of perfection for themselves that is hard to reach. They become frustrated if they do not reach their goals. Sympathetic adults can help them set more realistic goals by teaching them to focus on what they can do as opposed to what they cannot. Discipline and self-control are habits that can be learned in a structured caring environment with clear rules and limits. Laboratory classes, such as those in vocational education, with concrete operations that lead to abstract reasoning, are a sound course for these young people. They need to spend

time in the here-and-now and not spend too much of their time conjuring up elaborate dream worlds that serve no purpose.

Intellectual games can be interspersed or coupled with physical activities to capitalize on the tremendous energy of early adolescents. Their interests, concerns and capabilities can vary from day to day. When a group of 20 to 30 are in a classroom together, the diversity is tremendous. Schools can respond by offering variety in the curriculum, flexibility in the use of space and schedules, varied methods and materials and diverse kinds of teachers.

Perhaps the best thing that schools can provide early adolescents is help in developing a firm belief in themselves and their abilities and a realistic view of what expectations are possible both in family and work life. This is more critical at this stage than learning the knowledge base in a number of subject areas. Caring adults also can help middle school students develop caring attitudes about many family, community and world issues, such as the environment and the plight of less fortunate people.

Between the ages of 10 and 14 life suddenly changes. You haven't paid much attention to your body for years, not since you were very young and discovered you had body parts, like hands, feet, nose. Now your body once again begins to occupy your mind.

Physical Development

One day early adolescents look around and notice that their friends are much smaller or much larger than they are. Some persons have shot up in height, some have increased in weight. Some bodies have matured and rounded out; others are still quite lean, not muscular looking. Arms and legs may have grown more quickly than the rest of the body. Suddenly, some may wear a size 10 or 12 shoe. These changes have made them clumsy. They often spill or knock over things unintentionally. It is most embarrassing!

Bones may have grown faster than muscles, making it very easy to break a bone at this age. The tail bone is beginning to take its final form, with three lower bones beginning to fuse together. It is very difficult to sit on this tailbone for long periods of time in one position. Early adolescents wiggle a lot, trying to find a comfortable position that doesn't really seem to exist.

Perspiration becomes a problem. Sweat glands, particularly in the armpits, become increasingly active. Odors can become offensive. Early adolescents may not even be aware of the odor until someone points it out to them, and they feel embarrassed. Deodorant enters their life. They vaguely remember seeing this cosmetic among their Mom's or Dad's things, but never thought much about it before.

The increase in the secretion of hormones by the pituitary glands triggers more rapid growth and determines tissue function and growth. The control of the adrenal glands often is irregular. Huge quantities of hormones may be produced at embarrassingly inopportune times. Early adolescents may feel like running a mile when they are being asked to quietly

work 50 math problems at their seat in the classroom. They struggle to repress the urges their bodies are giving them and wonder if teachers know how hard it is.

Sexual changes also are taking place. The ones they do not understand often confuse them, especially when they have not been told what to expect. They have been told that most of the changes are quite normal, but what is normal? The appearance of pubic hair, hair under the arms and facial hair on males are just some of the changes that take getting used to. The development of breasts in girls and a larger penis and testes in boys may cause early adolescents to look more critically at how their clothes fit and look. Menstruating may cause embarrassment for girls, especially if they are one of the first to begin.

These physical changes also are accompanied by socio-emotional changes.

Socio-emotional Development

Even though girls are about two years ahead of boys in physical development, both genders have similar concerns. They may view the opposite sex differently than they did when they were younger. Often they don't feel as good about themselves anymore. Their self-esteem is low. This is true to a greater extent for girls than for boys"perhaps because girls face societal pressures to look good and not outshine boys in school. Readjustment of self-esteem is part of a search for a new identity as an adult.

Early adolescents feel a need for success. They like tasks with definite endings and beginnings, but not grade school stuff. They often take genuine pleasure in vocational projects that involve recognized structure and a feeling of accomplishment on completion.

Successful projects, such as creating a career portfolio, a circuit board, a graphic drawing or locker organizer, are very personal projects that also bolster self-esteem. Group projects — a planned event with a group of senior citizens, providing child care for holiday shoppers, creating a marketing strategy for a product made by the group, clean-up day at a local park— facilitate social skills along with academic learning. Exploring new things can be the best part of school for these students.

Sometimes the emotions of early adolescents reach remarkable depths and extremes. They find themselves loving something or someone one minute and hating it or her/him the next. Yet their emotional feelings are more easily forgotten than they will be later in life. They may become angry quite easily and usually don't even wonder why others often think their anger is unreasonable.

Being accepted by peers becomes a central concern in the life of early adolescents. To be accepted they may do things that

they would not have thought of doing before, such as hurting others by making fun of them, or hassling their teachers. They prefer same-sex friends but have many opposite-sex crushes.

Early adolescents are beginning to seek an identity of their own. Feelings about parents, teachers and other adults begin to undergo changes. They still need lots of adults around, but they are not always sure how to respond to them. One of their tasks is to define an adult masculine or feminine role model for themselves. They need a variety of adults around so they can make judicious choices. In addition to parents, Sunday school teachers, scout leaders, coaches, advisors and teachers who form a close relationship with them individually can play a key role in their adult identity.

They need the freedom to take part in the adult world and move away from childish roles. Early adolescents need a place of their own to retreat to when the larger environment is too much. Yet they need to continue to return to the mainstream of life around them, to learn the social skills needed, such as proper etiquette, appropriate hygiene and dress.

Their new awareness of their bodies leads them to spend extended periods experimenting with makeup, hairdos and clothing. Their new found vanity makes the bathroom the most important room in their life. This does not endear them to adults around them, who cannot understand how it can possibly take two hours to do one's hair. What these adults fail to realize is that puberty makes them feel like they are on stage and everyone is in the audience.

Early adolescents also think that they are right no matter what. They will argue that red is black and black is red if necessary. They feel they must be right.

Youth aged 10-14 also believe they are invincible, which can lead to risk taking behaviors such as unprotected sex, drinking, drugs and not wearing a helmet when riding a bicycle or seat belts when riding in a car. They believe that bad things happen only to other people. The belief that they are invincible allows them to experiment more freely. This characteristic endears them to teachers who capitalize on their curiosity and their willingness to try anything.

They like to be active and involved so they do projects and activities. In order to earn their own money, they babysit or have paper routes. They think a lot about getting a real job like the high schoolers. However, there may be one thing they do not realize. Often the best jobs are those that provide little or no monetary reward but very valuable sets of experiences, such as volunteer work for nonprofit organizations and social services.

These experiences can show early adolescents how to wait on someone else rather than be waited on and can give them a feeling of being important because they are needed to help someone else.

Adolescents whose parents or guardians can afford to support them in these experiences are very lucky. This type of work allows them to learn lessons about life that can be more valuable than often mindless, repetitive entry-level commercial work that requires little responsibility and often is done in isolation from other workers.

Most early adolescents find all these changes challenging. But imagine an early adolescent dealing with all these personal changes and living in a home and family environment that is unstable"for example, where their parents or guardians are dysfunctional (alcoholic, unemployed, surviving a traumatic experience in their lives). When there are no positive role models in the home, the school becomes even more crucial in furnishing these early adolescents with the stability they need to negotiate the changes occurring in their lives.

Summary

If early adolescents manage to negotiate the fine line between dependence and independence and industry and identity, they are well on their way to becoming mature and responsible adults. Much of what they will become is up to them, but they need an environment that will facilitate their growth. Supportive adults, challenging experiences and time to experiment will help them on their way.

The world needs each and every one of them, regardless of race, creed, sex or color, to become all they can be. Early adolescents must have the best support we can provide as they travel the route to adulthood. We cannot afford to lose any of their potential on side roads leading to drugs, traffic accidents, suicide or imprisonment.

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Chapter 2

Essential Elements of Middle-Level Education

by John H. Lounsbury

The characteristics of young adolescents, well described in the opening chapter, are the justification for all the educational features, characteristics and arrangements proposed.

How do these characteristics translate into middle-level program components? What are the educational outgrowths of these realities of human growth and development that provide the foundation for middle level practices? Is it even possible to develop a list of program characteristics or essential elements?

These and related questions are not easily answered. The middle school movement, one late chapter in the larger and much older education reorganization movement, is now into its third decade and still under development.

The middle school concept is based fully and exclusively on the nature and needs of youth between the ages of 10 and 15.

But a consensus has emerged regarding the general characteristics of a quality middle school. Although practice still lags far behind theory, there is relatively little disagreement among middle-level leaders about what an ideal program for 10- to 15-year-olds ought to look like.

Of course, these leaders might argue that such a vibrant educational idea as the middle school concept can not be reduced to a firm list of specific characteristics. However, general philosophical consensus on major characteristics has evolved, and it provides ample guidance for those seeking to develop effective programs for young adolescents.

This chapter presents a list of these characteristics or conditions. Beyond the first one, they are in no particular order. They are based on my own judgment, but they do reflect the growing consensus. While this list differs from other lists, the differences are more in degree than in kind. From one standpoint I recognize that dividing a total school program into discrete categories doesn't do it justice. A school, particularly a middle school, is more than a collection of separate programs and activities. These parts are closely integrated and interactive, and that truth should be kept in mind.

Because it is new and apparently different, people regularly ask, "Just what is a middle school?" In simplest terms it could be defined as "an educational institution established to serve young people who are in the transition period between childhood and adolescence, most commonly composed of grades 6-8."

Characteristics of a Quality Middle School

1. A positive school climate, an atmosphere of teacher-teacher, teacher-student and student-student cooperation.

A good middle school evidences caring and collaboration in all its efforts and activities. Positive interactions between all parties in classrooms, corridors, the cafeteria and the offices are signs of the ethos that must be present if a school is to be a quality middle school, one where the kids come first. In "An *Agenda for Excellence at the Middle Level*" (1985), the importance of the atmosphere was explained this way:

"School improvement depends on a change in the culture and climate of the institution not on the addition of certain program elements that seem to appear in effective schools. Specific attention must be given to the alteration of the culture and climate of the school so that it supports excellence and achievement rather than intellectual conformity and mediocrity."

The middle school concept is not just a collection of organizational procedures and practices; it is a way of life, an attitude, a philosophy. If a faculty does not believe in youth and possess a willingness to cooperate and experiment, the administrative imposition of such a characteristic as a teacher advisory program, for instance, will not result in a good middle school. Much of what a school teaches is implicit in its atmosphere and the collective attitudes of the adults in it. Critical in creating the atmosphere needed is an enthusiastic and articulate principal who is a strong advocate for middle-level education.

2. A curriculum organization that clearly departs from the subject/class arrangement for a large portion of the day.

To bring needed wholeness to learning, to help youth grasp the nature of their world and to counteract the fragmentation of the school day, good middle schools are moving away from departmentalization. Although long established and widely accepted, departmentalization is an albatross around the neck of middle schools. It is contrary to reality and actually handicaps learning. While providing subject area expertise, departmentalization tends to focus on the temporary acquisition of discrete parcels of information, relies heavily on frontal teaching, rarely engages students sufficiently and increases the likelihood of discipline problems.

To counter these conditions while still insuring competence in subject knowledge, middle school advocates promote interdisciplinary teaming as a viable alternative to departmentalization. Teaming provides opportunities for faculty to correlate and integrate their instruction, which increases their sense of efficacy and, as a result, improves their morale.

Now most middle schools have either instituted interdisciplinary teams or are in the process of moving toward them. Teams usually include from two to five teachers, each with

appropriate subject specialization. The most common arrangement is for a group of four teachers—one language arts, one science, one social studies and one mathematics—to assume responsibility for the basic academic program of one hundred or so pupils whose core courses are scheduled in a block.

Regrettably, scheduling common planning time for the interdisciplinary team results in the separation of the unified arts/exploratory areas from direct involvement in the academic block. The exploratory and special area teachers often are organized as a separate team, which gives them a sense of collegiality, although it keeps them apart from the academic component.

As the interdisciplinary teams move toward true problem-centered instruction, they can utilize content and resources from any area. The World of Work, Technology in America and Tomorrow's Careers are among topics often dealt with by interdisciplinary teams when they venture into thematic units. While only a small minority of middle schools presently employ themes, strands or problems as the primary vehicle for the bulk of instruction, the trend to do so is clearly underway. Before the end of the century, truly integrated instruction will be widely practiced.

3. A definite curriculum commitment and plan to deal with the affective aspects of education.

A school's primary obligation is to develop the intellectual or cognitive domain. Yet with young adolescents the influence of the affective is so great that success in academic achievement is highly dependent upon the affective aspects of education. All learning occurs in an affective context; it is never free from an affective influence, especially with emotional young adolescents.

Middle schools try to meet the personal and social needs of their students in the way they treat them in classes, through the content they select and often with special programs focused on the affective aspects of the students' education. Such programs usually place a professional adult, classroom teacher or other certified person in charge of a relatively small group of students with whom they meet on a periodic schedule for discussions, interaction and activities. Called teacher advisory, advisor-advisee, homebase or by other locally coined labels, these programs are clear evidence of a school's belief that young adolescents need ongoing and readily available assistance in their total development—socially, emotionally and physically as well as intellectually.

It is during the middle years that young adolescents literally decide who they are, making value decisions that determine much of their future behavior. An effective advisory program can provide them the opportunities and the context for arriving at positive answers. Teacher advisory programs may meet as seldom as weekly or as often as every day. Meetings usually last 20 to 30 minutes. Middle schools must not leave to chance opportunities to meet the affective needs of their clients.

Why do we need Middle School?

Because students in this age group have some unique features and some very special importance, to wit:

1. All move through the puberty/maturation cycle and experience a growth spurt but at greatly varying times and speeds. Therefore, we group them together not because they are alike, a homogeneous group, but because they are different and diverse.

2. More physical growth occurs during these years than at other times of life. Social, emotional and intellectual growth is also occurring.

The existence of an advisory program in no way reduces the need also for professional counselors. In fact, in some ways it increases the need for such essential personnel. Not only are they likely to serve as coordinators of advisory programs but they accept referrals from advisors, provide preventive group counseling and crisis counseling and are a source of the specialized expertise classroom teachers usually do not possess.

4. An extensive program of enrichment, exploratory and interestcentered classes or activities.

No other aspect of a middle school program is more reflective of the nature of young adolescents than the exploratory component. Early adolescence is a period of adventure, of heightened curiosity, of experimentation, of finding oneself and one's particular aptitudes and interests. To meet this basic need of 10- to 14- year-olds, middle-level schools institute exploratory programs. While such programs are as old as the junior high school, typically they still fall far short of what would be developmentally appropriate.

A true middle school ought to provide a cycle of required exploratory courses throughout the sixth and seventh grades as well as some exploratory electives in the eighth grade. Areas typically included are art, music, home economics, technology education (formerly industrial arts), computers, drama, speech, consumer education, careers, and foreign languages. Many other subjects or topics are appropriate in an exploratory program.

In addition, a quality middle school also will provide a regular series of short-term, interest-centered experiences, often called mini-courses. In such courses almost anything that is of interest to a group of youngsters is fair game—guitar playing, cross-stitching, macrame, ham radio, rocket building, chess and so on. Faculty avocations or special talents, supplemented with those of persons in the community, often are a sufficient resource for mini-course programs. Such programs should not be labeled frills or extras. Given the developmental needs of this age group, they are basic. These exploratory experiences are usually the last times that the students will have such an opportunity to sample life's choices in a benign setting.

But exploration is not something dealt with only in special courses; it is an approach that ought to permeate every middle school class in the academic block as well as in electives. The major academic subject areas are rich sources of exploratory activities that are all too seldom used to advantage when predetermined and pre-selected content is covered methodically.

5. A comprehensive program of health and physical education that includes both activities and instruction.

Young adolescents are greatly concerned about their physical development. Physical education is, therefore, as important as any other subject and deerves an equal allotment of time. To be fully effective, such a program must provide ample activities and exercise and not force inappropriate competition.

The programs must include attention to an individual's development and fitness, with instruction that helps young people understand their own development, the greatly varying rates of development that are normal at their age and how to deal with the health issues that arise at this time in life.

Intramurals should provide for the participation of nearly all students in team sports. While competitive, intramural contests do not involve only the budding athletes in high-pressure competition that is developmentally inappropriate.

6. A developmental skills program that provides for the context teaching of reading and other communications skills for all pupils.

Oral communication is a particularly neglected basic skill, yet it is critically important in securing and maintaining employment. Problem-solving and critical thinking, which cannot be taught in the elementary school because the students are developmentally immature, are now essential skills that require the attention of all teachers. Caring and coping are also skills that deserve to be developed during the middle school years.

Competence in these skills is more essential for success in the future than is the temporary retention of particular bits of discrete subject matter, which typical tests measure. Quality middle schools recognize this fact.

All members of the middle school faculty should accept responsibility for developing the communications skills. All instruction involves the use of language and all instructors should advance students' understanding of and effectiveness in the use of language.

7. An acceptance of responsibility for developing the desired attributes of behavior.

One of the most distinguishing features of a middle school is its open acknowledgement of responsibility for helping students "to become" as well as "to know."

The ultimate objective of all education is changed behavior. Typical evaluation practices obscure this reality as they measure only the temporary acquisition of information. Young adolescents are in a critical period of life when they are making basic decisions about their values, attitudes and personal standards. The conclusions they reach during these formative years persist into adulthood and are determinants of their behavior.

Fortunately, with middle school students, meeting their nonacademic needs is the best way to help them achieve their academic needs. One objective supports the other. As the strong socialization needs of young adolescents are accommodated, the students are more open to the academic lessons.

3. The adult personality is formed during this period. This includes the basic self-concept, philosophy of life and/or code of values—the ultimate determinants of one's behavior.

4. Despite its enduring importance, this period of life is little understood and greatly neglected.

5. The incidence of social distress (suicide, crime, drugs, etc.) skyrockets during this period.

6. The educational programs typically provided during these years are less well correlated with the nature and needs of students at this age level than is the case at other age levels.

The considerable attention that middle-level educators correctly give to self-esteem does not detract from the achievement effort, but enhances it.

Only as educators and parents recognize the developmental priorities of young adolescents—social and physical—will they be fully successful in advancing the more traditional goals of schooling.

8. A comprehensive program of evaluation and reporting that reflects the broad objectives of middle level education.

Gordon Vars has characterized the traditional ABC system of evaluation as the Achilles' heel of middle-level education. His point is valid, for until the typical narrow grading system is altered drastically, it will not be possible to have a truly successful middle school.

On at least two major counts, most evaluation systems fall far short of what is needed.

First, they exclude the student from actively participating in the process of evaluation. Students wait, apprehensively, for the judgment of the teacher-god, whereas they ought to be involved in assessing their progress and present status as well as formulating goals for the next grading period. At this time of life when they are making major decisions about their aspirations and abilities, it is inexcusable that they are not led in the process of self evaluation.

A second major weakness is the almost complete absence in most report cards of real evidence of the achievement of all-important attributes of behavior. The typical notation on "conduct" usually is no more than an indicator of the absence or presence of overt misbehavior. Fully effective middle schools have students assess their own progress and include in individual report cards indications of progress in developing specific desirable behavior traits.

9. An activity/laboratory approach, rather than a presentation/telling approach, is utilized for most instruction.

Passive learning in which students sit and listen while teachers stand and talk is the bane of good educational practice. When a class is dealt with as a single entity—still the predominant mode of instruction in middle school—young adolescents experience boredom. Frontal teaching does not sufficiently involve students.

Cooperative learning and other forms of group work are more effective with young adolescents. They need to be involved, to interact and to be doing something other than listening. Variety is the spice of life—and middle level education. Learning activities set in a game format appeal to these youngsters who still have one foot in childhood. Independent study and learning centers also have a place in early adolescent education.

Increasingly it is being recognized that the more students are involved in both deciding what to study and how best to learn it, the greater is their achievement. The now popular concept of service learning is particularly germane for middle school students. They are tired of academic exercises. Developmentally they are ready for engaging in experiences that have value in and of themselves.

Vocational education always has provided a form of service learning—through on-the-job experiences that give relevancy to classroom instruction. Now many middle schools involve their students in service learning projects, such as reading to Head Start children, working with the elderly in a retirement or nursing home and tutoring children in a nearby elementary school.

10. A curriculum that balances the past with the present and deals with topics that have inherent interest to students.

Middle-level students live in the here-and-now while most traditional course content is set in the then-and-there. While there is a place for teaching certain pre-selected and prescribed material, the best results are achieved with young adolescents when the concerns and questions they have about themselves and their world are sources of curriculum content and the students have been involved in selecting the topics to be learned.

A major curriculum reform thrust in middle-level education is currently under way. It is reminiscent of the progressive education movement of the 1930s and 1940s. The full impact of this endeavor is yet to be felt, but indications are that the textbook-dominated, traditional curriculum of the junior high school will not survive—and it shouldn't.

The firm place of vocational education in the new curriculum schemes is apparent. Understanding the world of work, participating in apprenticeship activities, preparing personally for interviews and service as an employee are all very much in line with the here-and-now needs of young adolescents who are anxious to participate in the world of adults.

Vocational Education in the Middle School

While later chapters will discuss in detail proposals for the special role of vocational education in a quality middle school, it is appropriate to note here that the critical exploratory component should be vocational as well as avocational. The opportunity to try out new areas of learning, explore new aspects of adult life and ascertain career aptitudes and interests all are part of the new vocational education concept for middle schools.

Likewise, the emphasis on life-related skills and behavioral attributes is directly related to "what work requires of schools." It is particularly interesting to see the close correlation between the objectives of the middle school and the recently

"My fundamental promise: The middle school will succeed, fully and finally, to the degree, and only to the degree, that it reflects in its program and its practices a working knowledge of the nature and needs of young adolescents—and that knowledge must be shared by the school community."

—John H. Lounsbury

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released statement of "Workplace Know-how" in the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report, which examined what the demands of the workplace are and whether school graduates were capable of meeting them. The Commission formulated the following explanation of "Workplace Know-how":

Workplace Know-how

The know-how identified by SCANS is made up of five basic *competencies* and three *foundation skills* that are needed for solid job performance.

Workplace Competencies

Effective workers can productively use:

Resources. They know how to allocate time, money, materials, space and staff.

Interpersonal skills. They can work on teams, teach others, serve customers, lead, negotiate and work well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Information. They can acquire and evaluate data, organize and maintain files, interpret and communicate and use computers to process information.

Systems. They understand social, organizational, and technological systems; they can monitor and correct performance; they can design or improve systems.

Technology. They can select equipment and tools, apply technology to specific tasks and maintain and troubleshoot equipment.

Foundation Skills

Competent workers in the high-performance workplace need:

Basic Skills—reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking and listening.

Thinking Skills—the ability to learn, to reason, to think creatively, to make decisions and to solve problems.

Personal Qualities—individual responsibility, self-esteem, self-management, sociability, integrity.

(U.S. Department of Labor, Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1992)

Just as schools generally need major restructuring, so does vocational education itself. Fortunately, the middle school movement, which is leading the educational reform effort in our country, provides rich soil for planting the seeds for a new

vocational education crop. Vocational educators must recognize and accept the tremendous changes that have taken place in our society, be ready to re-tool their traditional vocational programs and take advantage of the opening the middle school movement has provided.

In the years just ahead vocational education, even at the high school level, will be less focused on specific occupational skills and more focused on general personal development skills. The traditional—and false—dichotomy between vocational education and academic education will gradually disappear as will the presumed separateness of exploratory experiences and academic instruction. Whether or not vocational education and vocational educators can maintain a separate and distinctive role is an open question. What does seem certain is that business as usual in vocational education will not survive.

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Chapter 3

Exploring Life's Work: A New Role for Vocational Education

by Jerelyn B. Schultz

Experts generally agree that exploration should be the focus of the middle school curriculum. They note that it is too early an age for young people to specialize. Exploration involves providing early adolescents with opportunities to range across a variety of activities, courses and areas.

Middle school movement leaders, including James Beane, Edward Brazee and John Lounsbury, believe that vocational education can play a critical role at the middle level. However, they stress that stereotyped perceptions individuals have of vocational education programs are a limiting factor.

They contend that vocational education programs should be perceived as education for employment or education for life's work if they are to be an integral component of the middle school curriculum. The separate subject matter approach, traditional for vocational education at the middle level, results in tremendous overlap.

Vocational education programs should be perceived as "education for employment" or "education for life's work" if they are to be an integral component of the middle school curriculum.

Brazee advocates identifying the kinds of abilities, skills and knowledge youth need to go out into the world and helping early adolescents explore a wide variety of careers and the skills they will need to get there.

Beane proposes doing away with subject matter lines entirely at the middle level and helping students begin to look at themselves and social meaning. Questions early adolescents have about themselves and their world should guide the curriculum.

The use of themes as an approach for middle-level curriculum is often recommended. The themes should be related to exploring the future in the real world.

Lounsbury suggests that programs should assist early adolescents in exploring the world of work, technology and the personal characteristics needed for career and family life. He fears that education will neglect to emphasize the qualities of being a good person, a good family member and a good worker.

The AVA Ad Hoc Middle School Task Force has formulated a new role for vocational education at the middle level that reflects the needs of early adolescents, includes key concepts associated with the middle school movement, focuses the curriculum on exploration of life's work and proposes integration of vocational education with the academic core at the middle school level.

In this chapter we first identify basic beliefs that reflect fundamental convictions about vocational education at the middle school level.

Next, there is a proposed statement of the philosophy of vocational education at the middle level. It identifies what is most important for vocational education to be doing and forms a basis for future planning efforts. This philosophy emphasizes the uniqueness of vocational education's role in the middle school.

Finally, we describe core concepts that should be integrated into the middle school curriculum to assist early adolescents in exploring life's work.

Beliefs

The AVA Ad Hoc Middle School Task Force has formulated a new role for vocational education at the middle level.

The American Vocational Association believes that:

- Vocational education at the middle level should focus on exploring the real-life roles of worker and family member.
- Learning occurs best in environments that accommodate various learning styles and provide early adolescents with opportunities to apply learning through the performance of real-life tasks.
- Early adolescents learn best through active, cooperative, hands-on activities directly related to their lives and their concerns.
- Vocational education must be an integral component of the basic core of learning for all students to prepare them to live and work in a culturally diverse world.
- Vocational education can enhance learning and motivation at the middle level through the real-life application of basic academic skills.
- A discipline-specific orientation is not needed to explore life's work at the middle level.
- The primary basis for all decisions about vocational education at the middle level should be the best interests of early adolescents.
- Helping adolescents learn to solve real-life problems should be an integral part of the middle level curriculum.
- Parental involvement and partnerships with the business, industry and service communities should be essential components of middle-level vocational education programs.
- Vocational education is as important at the middle level as it is at the high school and postsecondary levels.

Philosophy

Exploring Life's Work, AVA's proposed vocational education program for the middle school, is the foundation upon which early adolescents (ages 10-14) may begin to explore their future family, community and work roles by capitalizing on their present needs and interests. Exploring Life's Work should be an integral component of the basic core of learning for all middlelevel students to prepare them to live and work in a culturally diverse world.

The educational process by which early adolescents explore life's work should reflect a partnership of the entire community, including families, businesses and community agencies and groups. Examining real-life problems by exploring the broadest array of information, experience and beliefs; forming alternatives; examining consequences; and making decisions in family and community environments should be essential components of this process, as described below.

Core Concepts

These core concepts to be included in middle level vocational education curricula should help early adolescents explore life's work. They reflect the developmental needs of youth (ages 10-14), focus on exploration and should be integrated into the curricula in the middle school.

Understanding Self

Self-esteem
Self-assessment
Self-sufficiency
Responsibility
Independence
Values and ethics

Human Relationships

Verbal and nonverbal communication
Interpersonal relations (at school, home, and work)
Interdependence
Respect for others
Cooperation and team building
Leadership development

Management and Decision Making

Decision making
Problem solving
Management of resources (time, energy, money)
Coping with change and crises
Balancing family and work roles

Career Exploration

Career assessment
Career options
Employability skills
Educational opportunities

Life Planning

Social meaning and membership
Family issues
Diversity in society
Environmental issues
Global issues
Community membership and involvement

Organization and Operation of an Enterprise

Supply and demand
Technological literacy
Production of goods and services
Marketing and distribution
Safety
Economic concerns
Supervision

These core concepts have been placed into an organizing framework for curriculum development. Three thematic areas have been identified. A rationale for each is presented below.

1. Understanding and Appreciating Self and Others

Because early adolescents are involved in self-discovery, educators need to assist them in developing a positive self-image and self-esteem. Having a positive self-image better equips early adolescents to appreciate and value others in a diverse and changing society and results in a better sense of independence, self-sufficiency and responsibility. It also helps to shape positive values, attitudes and personal ethics.

All of these elements work together to affect the future behavior, decision making and life satisfaction of early adolescents.

2. Forming a Concept of Work

Early adolescents need to view future life options within the context of work and family settings, responsibilities and benefits associated with each role and the skills required in these roles. They need to explore their lifestyle choices and how these affect and are affected by their personal needs and interests. Work in any home, school, business or community setting provides exposure to the processing, production, manufacture, marketing and distribution of goods and services for others. It is through this context that early adolescents can better view their future life options and make informed choices.

3. Developing Positive Relationships

If they are to become fully functioning and contributing members of the diverse work, family and community groups to which they will belong, early adolescents need to develop good communication skills, the ability to cooperate and work as a team member and positive interpersonal skills and to acquire a set of values to guide ethical social behavior.

Summary

The beliefs, philosophy and framework for curriculum development proposed in this chapter provide a vision for vocational education in the middle schools. Programs designed to help early adolescents explore life's work should be an integral component of the middle level curriculum, and vocational educators must become equal members of interdisciplinary teams at the middle level, if vocational education is to achieve this vision.

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Chapter 4

Exploring Life's Work: Model Programs

by Mary Monroe Schumway , Preston Smeltzer and Jerelyn B. Schultz

This chapter will showcase middle-level vocational education curricula or models in three states. These models are consistent with the beliefs and philosophical statement about the role of vocational education in the middle school presented in chapter 3 and also reflect the essential elements of middle-level education identified in chapter 2. They represent different approaches for helping early adolescents explore life's work. For help in determining the quality of middle school programs, see "10 Questions to Consider in Appraising a Middle School Program" in the Appendix.

Middle school vocational education programs in the future should reflect a commitment to exploration, interdisciplinary teaming, community involvement and subject matter articulation. Programs should be specifically designed to reflect the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of early adolescents and should provide students with opportunities to explore life's work as preparation for their future career and family roles.

New York

The Home and Career Skills curriculum.

This New York program was one of the first attempts to reform or reshape vocational education programs at the middle level. The curriculum is designed to help early adolescents live in a society of constant change and to prepare them to meet their present and future responsibilities at home and at work.

Overall objectives of the curriculum are to:

- Develop skills that lead to effective decision making, problem solving, and management in the home, school, community and workplace.
- Develop concepts and skills basic to home and family responsibilities.
- Develop personal skills that will enhance employment potential.

Early adolescents are provided opportunities to apply decision making, problem solving and management skills to daily living. The three areas of daily life addressed include:

Personal Development—awareness of self and relationships with others;

Personal and Family Resource Management—consumer skills, money management, personal environment management including nutrition and clothing;

Career Planning—overview of work possibilities, tentative personal plans and entrepreneurship.

Developers of the Home and Career Skills curriculum based it on the belief that the ability to reason, think critically and creatively and reflect on one's actions will empower early adolescents to act responsively toward themselves, their families, their peers and the larger society. A hands-on, experiential approach to learning is utilized. Real-life relevant tasks, laboratories, simulations and community involvement are integral to the course. Youth are expected to be actively involved in a participatory, supportive environment. Opportunities are provided for them to practice and develop skills related to the course content.

The New York State curriculum came about through a collaborative model of curriculum development and in-service education. There was significant involvement by all the groups that would be called upon to implement the new curriculum: teachers, administrators, counselors, teacher educators and the state department of education.

The New York State curriculum came about through a colaborative model of curriculum development and in-service education.

A train-the-trainer model was used for in-service education. The level of interaction among the groups, the resulting ownership that developed and a strong belief in the context helped generate a commitment to the curriculum that surpassed expectations.

Utah

Technology, Life and Careers (TLC) entry-level vocational program.

This Utah program for middle/junior high school is an activity-centered curriculum designed to alert students to the training and career options available in Utah's vocational education programs.

The total program is designed as a one-year course, which is taught in three 12-week segments. One of the following vocational cluster areas is covered in each 12-week segment:

Industrial Technology and Agriculture

Business and Marketing

Home Economics and Health Occupations

A Guidance Orientation component, which provides students with career orientation and exploration, also is integrated throughout the curriculum. Vocational teachers team together to cover these segments.

One of the main goals of the curriculum is to provide students with up-to-date information regarding technological advances, career options, job opportunities and available training.

Another goal is to increase student knowledge and understanding about international competition, the need for high-level skills, the personal ramifications of eroding family structures and the economics of work.

The total curriculum provides a variety of positive learning experiences such as skilled work tracks, diversified computer technology, resource management, human relations and problem solving skills and the integration of applied math, science, reading and writing.

Technology, Life and Careers (TLC) is designed to meet the needs of the early adolescent learner. The curriculum is an exploratory program with hands-on learning and problem solving activities as well as individual and group work. Adolescents have an opportunity to learn more about who they are and what they want to be.

Industrial Technology and Agriculture

The Industrial Technology/Agriculture section affords students opportunities to perform hands-on activities in the areas of communication, manufacturing, construction, energy/power, transportation and agriculture. Specific topics covered in this cluster area are: laser fiber optic communication, computer-aided drafting, laser exploration, numerical control machining, biotechnology, animal sciences-genetics, landscape architecture, environmental planning and computers in agriculture.

One of the main goals of the curriculum is to provide students with up-to-date information regarding technological advances, career options, job opportunities and available training.

Business and Marketing

The Business and Marketing cluster promotes student exploration of business skills and the marketing of goods and services. Specific topics covered in this cluster area are: basics of information technology, keyboarding and word processing, databases, spreadsheets, basic programming, graphics, telecommunications, marketing, entrepreneurship and company simulation.

Home Economics and Health Occupations

The Home Economics component provides students with useful independent living skills for the management and balance of work, school and family responsibilities. The Health Occupations component allows students to explore careers in the expanding field of health. Specific topics covered in this cluster area are: balancing work and family, communication, health occupations, family relations, child care, self-concept, family economics, problem solving, career choices, free enterprise and technology in the home and workplace.

Guidance and Orientation

The Guidance/Orientation component is an orientation and exploration program designed to provide students with a body of knowledge about themselves, educational and career planning and occupational options. The program seeks to assist students in exploring career goals.

Specific topics covered in this cluster area are: interest and ability appraisal; aptitude assessment; school, work, and occupational relationships; vocational orientation; gender stereotyping; counselor/teacher team efforts; goal setting, education and career planning.

The TLC curriculum units provide competencies, student activities, teacher information and evaluation tools. Before schools are allowed to implement the program, districts must commit resources for new equipment and teachers must participate in an extensive in-service program. These requirements have contributed to the success of the program.

The TLC curriculum has been implemented and evaluated in hundreds of schools, and thousands of students have benefitted from this new, exciting and innovative approach to middle-level education. Its success has been widely praised and applauded by the media, administrative personnel, teachers, parents and students nationwide.

Wisconsin

Concept learning is the central feature of Wisconsins's guide. Its authors believe concept learning recognizes how learning really occurs among middle school students.

A Guide to Middle School Curriculum Planning in Exploring Life's Work.

Created by middle-level educators and specialists, this publication of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction offers a new vision of middle school curriculum resulting from hundreds of hours of brainstorming, contemplation and creative thinking. Its focus includes both the paid and unpaid work of family, business/industry and community.

The guide is designed to promote the development of curriculum that will challenge early adolescents to grapple with big ideas; to begin to recognize their interests, aptitudes, and abilities; to ponder their futures and to initially map out their hopes and dreams. It offers a new way for educators and curriculum planners to create curriculum that grows out of the broad goals of K-12 education, that responds to issues and concerns of immediate interest to young adolescents and that can lead young adolescents to an understanding of who they are and what they would like to become.

Sections are devoted to concept learning, a contemporary view of the subject of exploration and the essential role of cooperative group learning. The guide contends that these teaching approaches are an essential part of any effective program. Effectiveness is defined as promoting higher-order learning at the middle level. Another chapter summarizes essential developmental issues and explains how curriculum based on this guide provides an effective approach for responding to these issues.

Concept learning is the central feature of Wisconsin's guide. Its authors believe concept learning recognizes how learning really occurs among middle school students. It requires students to

be actively involved in the learning process. It asks them to observe, compare, find similarities and differences and to form generalizations. Students are challenged to assemble otherwise disjointed information into useful knowledge that will serve them throughout school and life.

Six key concepts provide the guide's focus: cooperation, communication, management, motivation, socialization and interdependence. Sample classroom activities show how these important concepts can be formed or further developed in a variety of work contexts.

The Wisconsin guide was developed as a response to contemporary education issues including the knowledge explosion, fragmentation/integration, applied learning, changing technology, developmental guidance, high standards for all students, tracking, diversity and equity. The ideas that undergird this innovative and thought provoking publication address several long neglected aspects of vocational education. It is not a cookbook that can be readily implemented, but rather a guide to meaningful rethinking of middle-level curriculum's role and how to plan for its implementation.

Chapter 5

Setting an Agenda for the Future:
Challenges for Vocational Education

by N.L. McCaslin, Ruth E. Dohner, Matthew Hughes and Harry Drier

Vocational teachers and counselors, along with other middle school teachers, should help design and conduct educational programs to help early adolescents explore life's work. Vocational educators should be viewed as integral partners in the educational process at the middle school level and should collaborate with other subject specialists in the school.

Through full participation with other educators, vocational teachers and counselors can provide a supportive environment, facilitate the move toward an interdisciplinary curriculum and take action in schools that is in the best interest of early adolescents, their families and the community.

An Action Agenda

A curriculum designed to assist early adolescents in exploring life's work has much to offer middle school students as they consider potential career and life roles on the road to becoming mature and responsible adults. Immediate action needs to be taken if vocational educators are to contribute to improving the quality of the educational experience for middle school youth.

The AVA Task Force on Middle School presents the following suggestions"organized by national, state and local actions to be taken"as a starting point for discussion and dialogue.

National Level

1. **The American Vocational Association (AVA) Board of Directors should establish an official position on middle school programs and initiate collaborative efforts with organizations concerned with these programs.**

If AVA is to continue its recognition of the importance of middle school educational programs, a formal statement of this position to its members is needed. This statement should be based on the contribution of vocational education in meeting the educational needs of the early adolescent.

These needs are so important that no one organization can do all that is necessary. Official collaborative efforts should be developed with organizations such as the National Middle

School Association, the National Parent Teachers Organization, American Counseling Association, National Association of School Administrators, National Career Development Association, National Career Education Association and the National Association of School Boards.

2. **AVA should investigate establishing a section within the New and Related Services Division for individuals working with middle school programs.**

Vocational educators involved in middle school programs need communication networks for sharing their concerns, issues, problems and ideas.

AVA's New and Related Services sections have been an effective means to bring vocational educators together to initiate new ventures and should be helpful to individuals interested in middle school vocational education programs. A section for middle school educators should initiate collaborative efforts with other organizations. Likewise, all divisions of AVA need to actively encourage the involvement of middle school personnel.

3. **AVA should establish liaison with groups concerned with educational reform (such as SCANS) and identify common areas of interest in middle school educational programs.**

Policymakers, educators, parents, business/industry and politicians are seeking new ways to improve our educational system. These groups provide excellent opportunities to identify and examine shared areas of concern and implement innovative suggestions and solutions. Vocational educators' willingness to examine ways in which vocational education can contribute to the improvement of the educational enterprise during the middle school years will be well received.

4. **AVA should examine the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 and suggest amendments that would encourage effective middle school programs and activities.**

Reauthorization hearings for the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act will begin soon. AVA should review the Act and offer amendments that would help in the development of vocational and career development programs to assist early adolescents.

5. **The National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE) should be encouraged to add middle school issues to its research, development, technical assistance, dissemination and training agendas.**

NCRVE is a major source of program improvement ideas. AVA must influence the research agenda to include middle schools and demand that the centers address needs beyond research, including teacher training and curriculum development.

State Level

6. State departments of education should establish certification requirements for individuals teaching in work exploration programs in middle schools.

Vocational teachers must understand the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and vocational development characteristics of early adolescents as they plan the curriculum.

Early adolescent needs are often best met through organizational structures different than the traditional junior and senior high schools. The strategies that teachers need to employ to function effectively in middle schools include: problem-centered instruction, cooperative learning, interdisciplinary curriculum planning, collaboration, conflict resolution and academic and personal counseling.

State teacher certification leaders should consider the needs of early adolescents and their teachers in establishing state certification requirements.

7. Universities, colleges and curriculum development centers should develop curriculum materials for middle school teachers to consider in designing their programs.

The curriculum materials for middle school programs need to be congruent with the basic philosophy, goals and objectives of vocational education at the middle school. These work exploration curricula should include topics and problems or questions of personal interest to the early adolescent. Learning activities should stress experiential, active, and participatory processes. Instructional materials should challenge students' group and individual problem solving ability and encourage the use of higher-order thinking skills.

Cooperative rather than competitive learning activities for students in this age group should be encouraged.

8. Vocational teacher education programs should develop and modify courses to serve middle school teachers, administrators and counselors.

Very few teacher education programs are designed to prepare vocational educators to function in a middle school environment. Often, the psychological, social and educational needs of the early adolescent have not been considered in planning and conducting pre- and in-service offerings.

Teacher education programs need to revise their courses to help develop the knowledge and skills needed by middle school teachers, administrators and counselors in working with these young people.

More attention needs to be given to the vocational growth and development needs of early adolescents in middle schools.

Enhancements should be provided through interdisciplinary educational programs that afford students opportunities to explore personal goals and career interests and at the same time learn a wide range of practical skills. These programs should be designed to reflect the needs of early adolescents to be industrious and should facilitate their search for identity.

9. **College and university researchers, in collaboration with administrators and teachers, should investigate the design and effectiveness of middle school programs intended to help early adolescents explore life's work.**

Valid, reliable and experiential information is needed if efficient and effective middle school work exploration programs are to be planned, operated and determined to have made a contribution. The lack of high-quality research in this area and the need to be effective educators of early adolescents require new ways of studying and evaluating curriculum, classroom instruction and student learning behaviors.

Local Level

10. **The primary rationale for middle school integration of all courses should be to improve the learning environment and motivation to learn for early adolescents and to provide a blend of academic, social, and workplace methods for all students.**

Middle school education programs are based on early adolescent development and learning theory. Middle school vocational education programs should not be designed to recruit students into high school vocational education programs. Rather they should help early adolescents learn the work values and skills along with the family life and independent living skills that they will need now and in the future.

11. **Middle school work exploration programs should establish close relationships with the community.**

Early adolescents are in search of individuals to serve as mentors and role models. They often lack the necessary experiences to make important life decisions due to home and school isolation from the realities of work and community life. Middle school youth need active and realistic teaching and learning situations. These can be provided through collaborative arrangements with businesses, agencies and other organizations.

These experiences should provide educational and career information for early adolescents to help them explore future choices and opportunities. Using community- based learning experiences will assist early adolescents in understanding the importance of basic academic and vocational subjects as they apply to everyday life. The opportunity to apply these skills can increase student achievement and motivation to learn.

12. **Middle school vocational education programs should provide opportunities for the development of a greater understanding of diversity.**

The population of the United States is becoming increasingly diverse. Middle school vocational education programs should support and protect the cultural, ethnic and learning differences of all individuals. At the same time, programs should

incorporate instructional approaches appropriate for the diverse learning styles present in the classroom.

Teacher education programs and school administrators should recruit teachers and staff to represent diverse populations. Teachers should have experiences to broaden their own multicultural perspectives and to help them design learning environments that will enable students to learn how to interact effectively with diverse individuals.

13. Middle school administrators should include vocational teachers in planning interdisciplinary programs for early adolescents.

Middle school administrators and teachers need to broaden their contacts in designing programs to meet the vocational and career development as well as the general education needs of early adolescents. Movement toward more interdisciplinary curricula will help students respect the worth and contribution of all subject areas and see how each contributes to solving complex problems throughout life.

In preparing early adolescents for productive career and family roles, now and in the future, programs should focus on the issues, questions, problems and opportunities related to these roles.

14. Student organizations and activities should promote early adolescents' social development and self-concept.

Student organizations are used to teach cooperation, leadership and citizenship. This has been a strength of high school vocational student organizations. Involvement and participation of middle school students in such organizations can enhance their social development and self-concept.

Student organization activities and events in middle school should be based on the needs and characteristics of the early adolescent and not merely imitate high school vocational student organizations. Student learning activities and events in which middle school students compete with one another should be kept to a minimum.

15. Middle school administrators, counselors and teachers should include the vocational and career development of early adolescents as a topic in their in-service programs for teachers.

As work exploration programs are included in middle schools, it will be imperative that all teachers understand the importance of vocational and career development for early adolescents. This knowledge can then be used to enrich the middle school staff's understanding and appreciation of vocational education and how collaboration with vocational education can enhance the total learning environment.

16. Middle school administrators, counselors and teachers should be encouraged to experiment with innovative vocational and academic program integration.

Middle school administrators, teachers and counselors must be encouraged to try new ideas if exciting and dynamic work exploration programs are to be developed. The needed trans-

formation of educational experiences for early adolescents will require creativity, excitement and innovative ideas within a democratic and participatory process.

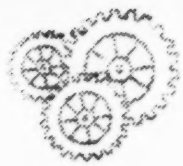
Summary

Early adolescence is a developmental stage during which life-long attitudes, values, behaviors and expectations for self and others are formed.

Middle school vocational education and academic educators should work together to provide diverse learning experiences designed to assist early adolescents in exploring life's work. An integrated approach that actively involves all middle school personnel is essential to the development of educational programs that provide opportunities for exploration and learning.

The American Vocational Association needs to work collaboratively with other professional associations in providing the leadership for vocational and career development programs in the middle school that will help youth explore life's work.

Appendix



Recommendations of The Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents*

Create small communities for learning, where stable, close, mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers are considered fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth.

Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents and who have been specially prepared for assignment to the middle grades.

Teach a core academic program that results in students who are literate, including in the humanities, social and physical sciences, and who know how to think critically, lead a healthy life, behave ethically, and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a pluralistic society.

Improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of young adolescents by providing a health coordinator in every middle grade school, access to health careand counseling services, and a health-promoting school environment.

Ensure success for all students through elimination of tracking by achievement level and promotion of cooperative learning, flexibility in arranging instructional time, and adequate resources for teachers.

Reengage families in the education of young adolescents by giving families meaningful roles in school governance, communicating with families effectively, and offering families opportunities to support the learning process at home.

Empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students through creative control by school staff over the instructional program linked to greater responsibility for each student's performance.

Connect schools with communities by identifying opportunities for youth service in the community, establishing partnerships and collaborations to ensure students' access to health and social services, and using community resources to enrich the instructional program.

**Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989). The Carnegie Corporation of New York.

This We Believe

National Middle School Association, 1982/1992

The middle school stands for clear educational concepts which evolve from a melding of the nature of the age group, the nature of learning, and the expectations of society. There should be, then, certain conditions, factors, and programmatic characteristics that are identifiable and that would be present in a true middle school. The components identified below, called essential elements, are considered to be of special importance.

1. Educators Knowledgeable About and Committed to Young Adolescents

The unique needs and characteristics of the middle school student dictate that a special type of educator implement the curriculum. Certainly a prerequisite for working with young adolescents should be a genuine desire to teach this age group. Coupled with that bent needs to be a thorough understanding of the human growth and development of the 10-14 year old, for herein is the foundation of all middle school practices.

2. A Balanced Curriculum Based on the Needs of Young Adolescents

The middle school curriculum itself must be formulated with regard to the educational needs and characteristics of young adolescent students. While societal expectations are important and tradition ought not be ignored, a true middle school curriculum will actually be based largely on student needs. The curriculum must carefully balance academic goals and other human development needs.

3. A Range of Organizational Arrangements

Various organizational arrangements should be utilized within the middle school, for the students are varied. A fully departmentalized, ability grouped seven period day is incompatible with what we know about young adolescents and learning. It is also a prime example of the unfortunate imitation of the high school that has long plagued intermediate education.

4. Varied Instructional Strategies

The unique characteristics of young adolescents provide a foundation for instructional methods, just as they do for curriculum content. The skills and achievement levels of middle school students are distributed across a very broad continuum. Students experience plateaus, rapid progress, and regression in physical coordination and skills achievement. Achievement simply does not proceed uniformly.

5. A Full Exploratory Program

The rapid physical, social, and intellectual development which occurs during these years requires the inclusion of brief but intense interest-based activities. A short attention span, difficulty in concentration, and the restlessness which accompanies changing physical bodies preclude learning modules which extend beyond 15-20 minutes.

6. Comprehensive Advising and Counseling

Advisement and counseling have very special importance at the intermediate educational level. Concern over body development, the desire for social acceptance, the seemingly inevitable conflict with adult norms and expectations, the desire to try out new ideas and beliefs, and the desire to experiment with a heightened intellectual ability all point to the need for an intensive and an extensive guidance program.

7. Continuous Progress for Students

Since growth during childhood is relatively steady and continuous, young adolescents may not be prepared for the growth irregularities common during the transition years. Therefore, educators and parents should reassure students that fluctuations in rate and duration of growth are normal and to be expected. This is not to excuse lack of effort on the part of the students, but to relieve the anxiety of some students who are exerting great efforts and are frustrated by their lack of accomplishment.

8. Evaluation Procedures Compatible with Nature of Young Adolescents

Early adolescence is the crucial period in the establishment of a wholesome self-concept. Therefore, evaluation, marking, and reporting procedures should help students discover and understand their strengths, weaknesses, values, interests, and personality. Emphasis must be on the positive progression, so that evaluation is self-enhancing, not demeaning.

9. Cooperative Planning

The varied educational needs of young adolescents means that the professional "as a single runner" cannot plan adequate experiences. Cooperative school-wide planning that involves faculty, administration, and specialists is an essential ingredient in the effectively responsive middle school. School advisory councils involving parental and community representation are very useful.

10. Positive School Climate

The overall climate of the school is itself a "teacher." A true middle school should evidence warmth, caring, and respect. These conditions should be apparent in the halls as well as in the classrooms, in the lunchroom as well as in the offices. The needed positive atmosphere cannot exist if it is not rooted in a sense of harmony and togetherness on the part of the professional staff.

— Source: *This We Believe*
National Middle School Association
Columbus, Ohio, 1982/1992.

An Agenda for Excellence at the Middle Level
National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1985

Middle level schools, which have a special place in American education, have special missions that require cultivation and serious attention if they are to help young adolescents reach their potential.

Because we cannot teach them all they need to know, we must teach them how to learn and how to adjust their lives to the changes that will surround them. To do this, we must provide high quality intellectual climates in our middle level schools and foster the development of adaptive skills that our students can use throughout their lives.

To these ends, this agenda addresses the elements of schooling that must receive the highest priority.

1. Core Values

For any institution to be successful, everyone involved in it must be committed to clearly articulated core values. These values must guide both individual behavior and institutional policies ad practices. Core values for the middle level school must address personal responsibility, the primacy of learning and intellectual activity, and respect for the diversity found in the school and the society that nurtures it.

2. Culture and Climate

School improvement depends on a change in the culture and climate of the institution, not on the addition of certain program elements that seem to appear in effective schools. Specific attention must be given to the alteration of the culture and climate of the school so that it supports excellence and achievement rather than intellectual conformity and mediocrity.

3. Student Development

To a large degree, success in school and a realistic adjustment to adult life depend on personal attributes and behaviors, not intellectual ones. Student development efforts should focus on the practice and mastery of these attributes and behaviors.

4. Curriculum

The content of today's curriculum serves primarily to develop intellectual habits and capacities that are likely to be applicable to other times and other settings. The curriculum must balance skill development with content coverage, which may be outdated before it is used. To prepare youth for the future, the middle level school curriculum must develop intellectual skills and an understanding of humankind that will permit the student to gather information, organize it in a meaningful fashion, evaluate its veracity and utility, form reasonable conclusions about it, and plan for individual and collective action.

5. Learning and Instruction

Ultimately, the quality of any youngster's educational experience is determined by the nature of the instruction provided in the classroom. Good teachers can overcome bad curricula; good curricula cannot compensate for poor teaching.

The best teachers are still recognizable to most of us; they are caring, enthusiastic, optimistic, and well-versed in pedagogy and their subject areas. They set high expectations but are easily approached for help and guidance. Most important, they are patient and quick to reward good student performance.

6. School Organization

The organization of the school should encourage the smooth operation of the academic program, clear communication among teachers and administrators, and maximum teacher and student control over the quality of the learning environment. The organization of the school should contribute to a sense of belonging on the part of the people who work and learn there, and should mitigate against anonymity and alienation from the primary mission of the school.

7. Technology

Technology is an inescapable part of life, but many schools have not developed coherent plans for its use. Since schools cannot make state-of-the-art technology available to everyone, training students in specific operations is not as important as educating them to use technology competently and thoughtfully in their study of specific subjects and in their approach to complex problems.

8. Teachers

Middle level youngsters require special kinds of attention and teaching. Therefore, it is important that only the very best teachers — those who understand the subjects they teach and the development of early adolescents — be permitted to work with these dynamic youngsters. To work with young adolescents, teachers require special preparation and certification. Preparation must include study in human development, counseling, differentiating instruction, classroom management, and home-school cooperation.

9. Transition

One of the main responsibilities of the middle level school is to assure the smooth transition for students from elementary school to high school. Most school systems maintain three distinct, autonomous, and separate units that do little to coordinate their activities, programs, or curricula. The coordination that exists usually results from informal agreements and conversations between and among principals; it rarely stems from planned efforts to integrate the schools' programs across all grade levels.

10. Principals

The preponderance of research concludes that the principal is the pivotal figure in effective schools. Without a strong instructional leader, there is little consensus on building goals, standards of conduct, or professional standards. The result is a lack of unity in purpose and a less effective school. Successful schools, on the other hand, enjoy strong administrative leadership, a clear sense of mission, and confidence in the capacity of administrators to handle problems that interfere with the learning program.

11. Connections

The success of any school is determined by the extent to which it is supported and valued in the community and by the parents of the youth who attend. Fewer households today have children in school; thus, the public no longer has the "child's eye view" of the school that was common for so long. This means that the school has to work harder to maintain good relations with its constituent community.

12. Client Centeredness

The most successful schools are those that understand the unique needs of their clients and fill those needs quickly and effectively. Most important, effective schools understand the relationship of development to learning so that students are not asked to violate the dictates of their development in order to participate fully in the educational program.

Source: *An Agenda for Excellence at the Middle Level*, National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, Virginia , 1985

10 QUESTIONS to CONSIDER in APPRAISING a MIDDLE LEVEL PROGRAM

1. Does the middle school provide ample opportunities for pupils to participate in the life of the school? to help determine its nature both in individual classrooms and school-wide?

2. Are students given ample opportunities to identify **and** develop their special interests and aptitudes as called for by their exploratory nature?

3. Do teachers have available, and do they utilize in making curriculum decisions, adequate information about each individual learner?

4. Is there a recent, well understood, fully accepted, and specific enough school philosophy or mission statement that is a **functional** guide for use in planning instruction and curriculum?

5. Does the school provide a time, a place, and an advocate for the ongoing discussion of personal, social, and related problems of youth such as a teacher advisory program?

6. Does the organization for instruction facilitate interdisciplinary planning and instruction? flexible use of time? varied groupings?

7. Do teams utilize fully common planning time to integrate instruction?

8. Does the organization and the curriculum really recognize the diversity of maturity and development that exists in the middle grades beyond what an individual teacher might do in a class?

9. Does the organization provide a transition from elementary education to departmentalized high school education?

10. Is there considerable use of the community as an educational resource?

John H. Lounsbury

CHARACTERISTICS OF A "REAL" MIDDLE LEVEL SCHOOL
How Does Your School Rate?

	Characteristic	Degree Present			
		None	Little	Some	Extensive
1.	A positive school climate, an atmosphere of teacher-teacher, teacher-student, and student-student cooperation.	0	2	4	6
2.	A definite curriculum commitment to, and a plan for dealing with, the affective aspects of education.	0	2	4	6
3.	A curriculum organization that clearly departs from the subject/class arrangement for a large portion of the day.	0	2	4	6
4.	An extensive program of enrichment, exploratory and interest classes or activities.	0	2	4	6
5.	An activity/laboratory approach, utilized for much or most instruction, as opposed to a presentation/telling approach.	0	2	4	6
6.	A developmental skill program that provides both separate and context teaching of reading *and* related communication skills for *all* pupils.	0	2	4	6
7.	A developmental guidance program built on the classroom teacher as adviser, but supplemented by guidance specialists.	0	2	4	6
8.	A comprehensive program of health and physical education (activities *and* instruction).	0	2	4	6
9.	A clear recognition of the social needs of early adolescents through both in-class and out-of-class activities.	0	2	4	6
10.	Considerable utilization of readily available and varied instructional materials.	0	2	4	6
11.	A comprehensive program of evaluation and reporting to parents.	0	2	4	6
12.	Utilization of the community as an educational resource.	0	2	4	6

If the administrator is not an enthusiastic, caring person, and an open advocate for middle level education, subtract 20-30 points.

Subtotal _____

Grand Total _____

A MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

	(25 minutes)	(200 plus minutes)	(45 minutes)	(45 minutes)	(35 minutes)	(7-10 min.)
Sixth Grade	Homebase Advisor-Advisee Period 1-20 ratio	Academic Block 2 teachers and 50 plus students	Phys. Ed.	Required Exploratory Cycle 9 weeks-art, music, I.A., home ec.	Interest centered mini-courses (M-W-F) Intramurals, schoolwide activities, clubs. etc. (T &Th)	Homebase A-A
Seventh Grade		Academic Block 4 teachers • 100-120 students • 1/2 time counselor/teacher	Phys. Ed.	Required Exploratory Cycle Foreign lang., bus., drama, etc. - 9 or 12 weeks		
Eighth Grade		Academic Block 4 teachers • 110-120 students • 1/2 time counselor/teacher	Phys. Ed.	Semester electives		

* (35 MINUTES LUNCH AND 20 MINUTES PASSING TIME NOT INCLUDED)

J. Lounsbury

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"Handles" to Grab in Conducting Curriculum Improvement Efforts

1. **Opinion Inventories**—fresh data source, from the important groups
    a. NSSE Teacher Opinion Inventory
    b. NSSE Parent Opinion Inventory
    c. NSSE Student Opinion Inventory *
    d. Homemade Opinion Inventory
    e. Ten o'clock Quickie
2. **Complete Self-Study**—NSSE Evaluative Criteria *: a comprehensive, organized study of the total program (does not require a visiting committee).
3. **Intervisitation**—seeing yourself by watching others; not limited to visiting model schools or selected teachers.
4. **Shadow Studies**—a series of "pictures" of the real curriculum, the one the consumer actually experiences.
5. **Focus on a Specific** (not a subject)—spelling, oral language, contemporary affairs, utilizing the community as an educational resource, or _____.
6. **An Analysis of the Reporting and Evaluation System**—do the tests given and the reporting system in use adequately reflect the school's objectives?
7. **Profile the Student Rody**—compile and analyze comparable data on all or a sample of students via questionnaire(s).
8. **A Study of the Transecent Outside of School**—involve community agencies and specialists, look from another angle, possibly a survey instrument.
9. **A Problem Survey of the Faculty**—the faculty's perception of the problems that are of most concern.
10. **Parent Discussion Groups**—an indirect approach to curriculum development by performing a task of value in itself.
11. **Staff Development for Teachers as People**—an attempt to change the only people who can really change the curriculum. Should not be a one-shot approach.
12. **An Attitude Inventory of Faculty**—Agree/disagree statements to clarify the philosophical likenesses and differences of the faculty.

—J.H. Lounsbury

* Available from National Study of School Evaluation, 5201 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, Virginia 22041